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ABSTRACT

Results of a state survey of inservice teacher education practices and problems in California indicate general dissatifcation with present programs. It was indicated that there is very little job-related or job-embedded inservice education, and most of the important options for providing training are not being utilized. The formal structure of school district and college related inservice practices appears to be much less effective than the help teachers give to one another. Respondents were favorably inclined toward collaborative governance of inservice education and for the establishment of local inservice organizations (such as teacher centers) in which teachers, community members, professors, and school district officials together develop goals, procedures, and ways of solving problems such as providng time for trairing and relating inservice education more closely to the need for improved competence. (JD)

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Number Two

"Inservice Teacher Education in California: Views of Teachers"

Office of Staff Development
William E. Webster, Director

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California State Department of Education
Wilson Riles, Superintendent of Public Instruction
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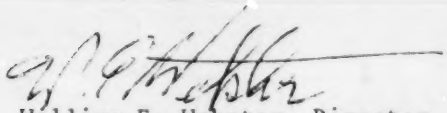
FOREWORD

California is very fortunate to have been one of the states included in an inservice education survey last spring. And we are especially fortunate that Dr. Bruce Joyce, Executive Director of the Urban/Rural Leadership Training Institute, is connected with the Stanford Institute for Research in Teaching.

Both Bruce Joyce and Les Birdsall are especially valuable resources to the California educational community as staff development prepares to become, as an integral part of school management efforts, a high priority activity. We are grateful to both of these colleagues for this advance look at an as yet unpublished report.



William E. Webster, Director
Office of Staff Development

INSERVICE TEACHER EDUCATION IN CALIFORNIA: VIEWS OF TEACHERS

by Bruce Joyce,
Executive Director, Urban/Rural
Leadership Training Institute
and
Les Birdsall
Network for School Improvement

This paper is designed to brief teachers, school administrators and higher education personnel in California on the results of a survey of inservice teacher education practices and problems. Sixteen hundred and eleven teachers in 107 California schools responded to questionnaires in May of 1977. Community members and higher education faculty responded to similar questionnaires as did their opposite numbers in Georgia and Michigan, and 25 sites around the country which are part of the Urban/Rural School Development Program. In that program community members and teachers worked together in collaborative decision-making boards to create inservice teacher education programs which were funded by the federal government. This particular report is designed specifically for interested parties in California, and deals particularly with information obtained from California teachers. It is worth noting, however, that the surveys in Michigan and Georgia produced approximately the same results as they did in California, and it is highly probable that inservice practices and problems in those states are very similar to those in this state. The School/Community Councils in the Urban/Rural Program, however, clearly generated different kinds of inservice experiences than are normally obtained. Apparently, the collaboration between teachers and community members in the Urban/Rural Program enabled those projects to surmount any of the normal problems of inservice education and create a much richer experience than we normally find.

The primary purpose of this briefing, however, is to talk about what California teachers said about themselves, the inservice education they have received in the past and presently receive, and their preferences for the future.

Who Responded and Where Are They From?

The teachers who responded are from all ages and have all degrees of experience in teaching.

About half are elementary school teachers, 40 percent of whom work as teachers in "self contained" classrooms. More than 60 percent have been teachers for more than 10 years and about 40 percent have been in their present teaching positions for at least 10 years. (Nearly three-quarters have occupied their present position for at least four years.) Nearly all feel that they are going to remain in education for a considerable period or indefinitely.

They work in all sizes and types of schools and with all kinds of children.

Differences in age, area (from rural to large cities), types of children worked with (e.g., poor to rich), and amount of experience bear no relationship to the inservice education which these persons receive or their views about inservice education or how to solve its problems. In other words, whether persons are novice teachers or very experienced, whether they work in rural areas, small town suburbs or cities, and whether they work with the rich or the poor appear to bear no relationship to their experience with staff development.

Second, those who get the most of one kind of experience get the most of other kinds. The persons who most experience intensive on-site help, also receive the most help from school district and university workshops and courses.

Types of Inservice Teacher Education Experience

The questionnaires included a definition of inservice education which included five forms in which it can be experienced.

1. It can be embedded in the job, with the emphasis on "hands-on" experience to improve teaching skills while working with children. (Analysis of television tapes of one's teaching is one example.)

2. It can be closely related to the job, but not take place while teaching is going on. (For example, a team of teachers can take an after-school workshop on team-teaching.)

3. It can consist of experiences to improve general competence, but not be tailored to specific needs as closely as the above experiences. (For example, science teachers can take workshops on the teaching of biology.)

4. It can be organized to help one obtain a new credential or prepare for a new role. (A teacher can prepare to be a counselor, for example.)

5. It can facilitate personal development which may or may not be job-related. (For example, one might study art history for personal enrichment which might or might not be evident in his/her teaching.)

All of these five forms of inservice education can be experienced in a variety of ways. Much of the questionnaire explored the reception of those kinds of inservice education and preferences for them.

How Much is Received and Who From?

None of the forms of inservice education is experienced more than once each six months by as many as one-fourth of the teachers. The first four forms (job embedded, job related, general competence oriented and credential oriented) are experienced more than once each six months for fewer than one-sixth of the teachers.

Job embedded inservice work is experienced once a year or less by nearly 80 percent of the teachers. Job embedded inservice education requires more or less continuous contact either among teachers who are helping each other or between teachers and persons who are trying to help them. Thus, it is virtually non-existent in a systematic sense within the state of California. Inservice education for personal development, mostly travel, reading, and courses taken for personal improvement, is the most common form of inservice education.

About half of the teachers received very little or no help at the stage when they were first beginning to teach. About 30 percent indicated they received all the help they needed when they were first beginning to teach.

Most of the help in the beginning years came from other teachers. College professors were mentioned by fewer than 5 percent, and fewer than 20 percent mentioned supervisors and other school district employees.

With respect to present help, 40 percent indicated that they are presently receiving little help or none. Only one-fifth stated that they are receiving as much help as they can presently use. Teachers again provide most of the help, supervisors second, with college professors almost absent form the scene.

Generally, self initiated travel, observation, and reading are the most frequent kinds of inservice help which are presently received. Nearly half of the population of teachers participates in university or college sponsored offerings less than once a year. A quarter indicated that they participated in no such activity during the last three years.

The overall picture is one of a relatively low level of inservice activity aside from that which is initiated by the individual and done privately by the person. Only 26 percent participate even in district sponsored inservice education (the most common formal inservice activity) more than once every six months.

Teachers are providing the most help, and most teachers believe that other teachers are their most effective inservice instructors.

About a quarter of the teachers believe that college and university professors are effective when they can have contact with the school site, but very few feel that school administrators are or can be their most effective facilitators.

The vast majority of teachers indicated that they would like more of each of the forms of inservice education. Almost 90 percent indicated that job embedded inservice education was desirable and job related education was highly desirable with more than 95 percent favoring more experiences to improve general competence.

Again, they expected that teachers would be the most effective instructors of job embedded and job related training, with professors the favored instructors for general competency oriented inservice, credential oriented inservice, and inservice to facilitate personal development.

In other words, the closer that inservice education gets to the classroom itself, the more teachers feel that they themselves are the best instructors. Given the considerable amount of experience of most members of the profession at this point, this appears to be a very reasonable conjecture.

About one out of six teachers feel they are qualified to offer some form of inservice help to other teachers.

A considerable proportion of the teachers indicated that they rarely received on-the-job follow-through for inservice experiences provided through districts and universities. Relatively few teachers analyze their teaching with colleagues, professors, or supervisors on more than an occasional basis, and a large number indicated that regular analysis of teaching, including the use of television and audio tape as well as live observation, would be desirable. Inservice education appears not to be reaching the classroom as effectively as it might, but teachers appear to be entirely receptive to a much greater amount of hands-on, on-site inservice education including work which takes place in the classroom and includes the analysis of teaching and diagnosis of needed teaching skills.

Nearly all teachers indicated that their primary reason for wanting greater amounts of inservice education was to improve their skills in teaching and that salary increments, credentials and higher degrees were of much lesser importance.

Options for Providing Time for Training

The most frequently mentioned options today for providing time for training are:

1. Having "released time" from instructional duties during the school day

2. Closing school for an afternoon or a day on a regular basis

3. Receiving pay for a month of summer study

4. Having pay for weekends or holiday inservice training.

Very few teachers have experienced any of these options. However, all of them appear to be favored by most of the respondents with "released time" during the school day, closing school on an afternoon or day on a regular basis and pay for summer study being the most approved possibilities, in that order.

Who Should Govern and Control Inservice Education?

Most teachers felt that they should be represented on governance boards to determine inservice teacher education goals and procedures, and a slight majority (55 percent) felt that teachers should have a majority on any governance board. Nearly everyone felt that it would be desirable for teachers themselves to evaluate inservice activities, but many felt that there should be collaboration with other organizations.

Collaborative governance in general was favored by most persons (as it is by community members and higher education persons), but most teachers felt that there were considerable obstacles to effective collaborative governance. (These included competition among vested interests, lack of skill in cooperative decision making, lack of financial support, confusion over definitions of inservice education and "over-busyness" with other priorities.) Most teachers favored local control over inservice activities with state support, incentives and guidelines.

Most of the respondents felt that the cost of inservice education should vary by its purpose. Teachers should pay for inservice education designed for general personal growth, but inservice education to improve job related skills and to redesign and improve the educational system should be paid for by the local districts and the states.

Areas of Greatest Need

Most teachers indicated that they are most comfortable working with "average children". Gifted, the poor, the rural, the inner city, and members of minority groups present greater challenges to teachers, and they indicated a much greater need for inservice education with those populations.

SUMMARY

In general, inservice education, aside from college and school district required workshops and course offerings, appears to be in a state of poor health. There is very little job-related or job-embedded inservice education, and most of the important options for providing training are not being utilized. The enormous formal structure of school district and college related inservice education appears to be much less effective than the help teachers give to one another. Most persons appear to feel that they would like much more job related and job embedded inservice education, that is, to have more help on site with the problems of the teaching role. While feeling that teachers offer much to other teachers, the respondents here were by no means hostile toward the inclusion of other persons, especially college professors and curriculum consultants. Nearly everyone was favorable toward collaborative governance of inservice education and for the establishment of local inservice organizations (such as teacher centers) in which teachers, community members, professors and school district officials together develop goals, procedures, ways of solving problems such as time for training, and, most important, relate inservice education much more closely to the need for improved competence. However, nearly all teachers are quite experienced, and it appears quite clearly that the need is not for mundane inservice education of the kinds that have been provided in the past, but for imaginative structures which will enable experienced teachers to improve their skills and to create more vital schools for the children they work with.

The problems are serious and are acknowledged as such, but the mood is optimistic.